

Candidate Information Pack

AREA CORONER- NORTH EAST KENT
AREA CORONER – CENTRAL & SOUTH
EAST KENT

Relevant Authority:

Kent County Council

21 May 2019

Area Coroner – 2 Posts

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This recruitment pack has been drafted in accordance with the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

1. ADVERT

Area Coroner – North East Kent Area Coroner – Central & South East Kent Salary - £102,000

Kent County Council is seeking to appoint two Area Coroners to support the Senior Coroner in providing a high quality coronial service to Kent and Medway residents. One post is to replace the current postholder for the North East Kent area, and the other post is a new position. We will seek to appoint the successful candidates as Assistant Coroners in the other three areas to provide resilience.

Once a Coroner is appointed they are then a Judicial Office holder until they reach the age of 70 years (compulsory retirement age) unless they choose to resign or are removed by the Lord Chief Justice or Lord Chancellor prior their to 70th birthday.

The posts will be based at County Hall, Maidstone. Office opening hours are 9am-5pm. The salary includes statutory out of hours work as set out in the legislative provisions.

We are looking for two exceptional candidates with excellent proven organisational, case management and efficiency skills, as well as experience of managing and embracing change. You will work closely with the local authority Head of Service and the Senior Coroner to ensure value for money, performance and financial efficiencies.

You will be required to demonstrate knowledge and experience of coroner law and of basic medicine, have proven skills in conducting investigations, case management and conducting inquests. You will also need to demonstrate the excellent communication and interpersonal skills necessary to deal with sensitive situations. You will need to be forward thinking, be passionate about providing a compassionate service to bereaved people and be able to work effectively with a range of partners.

The successful candidates will be required to carry out the duties and responsibilities of a coroner as defined in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and associated rules and regulations and as further described in various guidance issued by the Chief Coroner.

The successful candidates will be a barrister or a solicitor or Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives and satisfy the judicial-appointment eligibility condition on a 5 year basis. They will be under the age of 70 and be subject to the appointment and eligibility conditions within the [Coroners and Justice Act 2009 \(s.23 and Schedule 3\)](#).

If you wish to have an informal discussion or arrange a visit, please contact Giles Adey on 07740 186032.

Suitably qualified applicants are required to register as a New User on the councils jobs page of its website www.kent.gov.uk/jobs and complete an on line application form.

Closing date: 23:59 hours Thursday 13 June 2019

Interview date: 10 July 2019

Notification

The vacancy for these posts has been notified to the Chief Coroner and Lord Chancellor (as required by statute).

2. CORONER SERVICE INFORMATION

Area information

There are four coroner areas within the administrative areas of Kent County Council (KCC) and Medway Council and KCC is the lead authority for the purposes of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009:

- North West Kent (NWK)
- North East Kent (NEK)
- Mid Kent & Medway (MKM)
- Central & South East Kent (CSEK)

There are currently two Senior Coroners, one for the NWK area and one for the MKM area the latter of whom is also the acting Senior Coroner for NEK and CSEK.

Kent and Medway has a combined population of 1.82m and covers an area of 1,516 square miles.

The table below sets out the number of deaths referred during 2018 together with the number of post mortems and inquests. Post mortem examinations are conducted at five NHS Trusts by hospital and independent pathologists.

Area	Deaths referred	PM's	Inquests
CSEK	1747	688	245
MKM	2112	1023	316
NEK	1975	792	281
NWK	1892	762	259
TOTAL	7726	3265	1101

The coroner areas contain sections of the M2, M20 and M26 motorways as well as several major A-roads, main rail lines to/from London, the Channel Tunnel Rail link and Channel Tunnel the port of Dover, Ramsgate and Folkestone. There are 7 acute hospitals as well as several community hospitals, a large Mental Health Trust with inpatient and community facilities and 8 prisons.

Office and courts

The Senior Coroners are currently based at County Hall, Maidstone and inquests for MKM and CSEK are normally held at The Archbishops Palace, Maidstone. Inquests for NEK are normally held in Canterbury and Sandwich. The Coroners Officers and support staff are based in Cantium House which is opposite County Hall.

Staff

All Coroners Officers and support staff are employed and line managed by KCC through the Head of Service. Plans are being developed to co-locate the coroners (Senior, Area and Assistants), Coroners Officers/support staff and courts in a central location in Maidstone, estimated for completion in February 2021.

Management

Accommodation, contracts, tendering, finance and all Coroners Office staff (Coroners Officers, Coroners Court Officers, Ushers etc) are managed by the Council's Head of Coroner Service.

The Head of Service works closely with the Senior Coroners and all the major stakeholders (police, NHS, Funeral Directors, GP's, Pathologists etc) on the delivery of the service to ensure those affected by the work of the Coroners office receive a high quality service.

3. JOB DESCRIPTION – AREA CORONER

Purpose

Manage the day-to-day judicial operations of the office of the Coroner, leading certain aspects of delivery as delegated by the Senior Coroner, to support the provision of the highest-quality and most efficient coronial service for a Coroner Area.

Discharge the duties of the Coroner in accordance with the requirements of relevant legislation and case law, being mindful of the Chief Coroner's guidance.

Context

The Area Coroner is an independent judicial officer who supports the Senior Coroner in the delivery of a coronial service for one of the Coroner Areas in England and Wales.

An Area Coroner is appointed if the Area has a sufficient number of reported deaths, investigations and inquests to warrant the creation of the position. There is a legal requirement for the Area Coroner to step into the role of the Senior Coroner if he or she is not available.

The Area Coroner is not accountable to the Senior Coroner for his or her judicial decisions. The successful candidates will be expected to participate in the Chief Coroner's appraisal scheme for coroners which will be enacted in due course. The Area Coroner is likely to lead on the delivery of certain aspects of the service, as delegated by the Senior Coroner, which includes the implementation of systems and processes, and reporting on the performance of the service. The Area Coroner works in collaboration with the Local Authority, in the same way that the Senior Coroner does, on matters that are delegated by the Senior Coroner.

This collaboration ensures that the service is delivered with regards to the budget that is set and agreed annually, and there is regular forecasting and communication between both parties. The Local Authority has responsibility for the provision of staff and accommodation in accordance with provisions of section 24 Coroners and Justice Act 2009, which helps to ensure the delivery of the highest-quality and most efficient coronial service for a Coroner Area.

The Area Coroner deals with complex and routine inquests and out of court issues based on his or her level of experience. Routine cases will make up the majority of the workload in a Coroner area; however the Area Coroner is required to interpret the law of England and Wales including Coronial legislation and case law and European case law, which may be highly complex. The Area Coroner hears jury inquests or inquests where there are numerous Interested Persons who each have legal representation. However the majority of the most complex inquests are likely to be heard by the Senior Coroner. The complexity of inquests heard by the Area Coroner is sometimes increased if interested persons appear unrepresented along with other interested persons or organisations that have legal representation; it is the role of the Coroner to ensure a level playing-field.

The Area Coroner supports the Senior Coroner in dealing with a high volume of reported deaths, deciding how to investigate, including whether to authorise a post-mortem examination, to investigate further or, to conduct an inquest. The number of reported deaths varies across each coroner area dependant on a number of variable factors.

The Area Coroner deputises for the Senior Coroner and may be required to deal with anything that a Senior Coroner could face in an out-of-hours situation.

Core Accountabilities

1. Court Hearings

Deal with a range of complex and routine court hearings, ensuring that relevant statute and case law is appropriately applied, and the needs and requirements of those who engage with the service are respected, to deliver high-quality outcomes.

2. Case Management

Manage the allocation of cases under the guidance of the Senior Coroner, to ensure that cases are heard by an appropriately experienced Coroner, and manage own caseload (e.g. by issuing directions and controlling the scope of the inquest) to ensure that cases are able to be heard as expeditiously as possible.

3. Dealing with Referrals

Manage reported deaths that are referred to the Coroner, as allocated, by making enquires where necessary if the cause of death is unknown, establishing the medical cause of death, ordering post mortem examinations, and if necessary investigating the circumstances of death including holding inquests, to comply with relevant legislation.

4. Operational Management

Lead the day-to-day management of the Service, as delegated by the Senior Coroner, including developing systems and processes for managing and allocating cases, to support the Senior Coroner in delivering the highest-quality and most efficient coronial service for the Area.

5. Financial Management

Support the Senior Coroner in the development of the budgets for the Service in collaboration with the Local Authority and work at all time to ensure best value in terms of the use of public funds.

6. Training

As delegated by the Senior Coroner, deliver internal training for Coroners, Coroner's Officers and support staff to ensure consistency of approach and improvement in performance.

7. Expert Advice

Provide advice and expert knowledge on a specialist area to others, within and outside the Area, to share best practice and support improvements in the Coronial service within and outside the Area.

8. Managing Stakeholders

As delegated by the Senior Coroner, manage relationships with key stakeholders, including the Local Authority, within and outside the Area to educate partners/stakeholders, and identify opportunities for cooperation that will lead to improvements in the delivery of the Coronial service, or of other key public services.

9. Performance

Lead the collation and analysis of data and statistics through the development/maintenance of systems and processes, as delegated by the Senior Coroner, to support performance reporting for the Area.

10. 24/7 Duty

Where required by the Senior Coroner, deal with urgent matters and emergencies (including mass disasters) queries and issues that arise at any time out of hours, including advising the police in homicide investigations, the facilitation of organ and tissue donation, and the release of bodies for burial where there may be reasons for this to be expedited, to ensure the continuous provision of a high-quality service to stakeholders, bereaved families and the public.

11. Prevention of Further Deaths

Produce Prevention of Future Deaths Reports wherever an investigation gives rise to a concern that circumstances creating a risk that other deaths will occur, or will continue to exist, in the future (para. 7 Schedule 5 Coroners and Justice Act 2009). Issue the report to individuals and organisations who may have the power to take action, in order to eliminate or reduce the risk of death created by the circumstances identified.

12. Recruitment

Where required by the Senior Coroner, support the Local Authority in the recruitment of Coroners, Coroners' Officers and administrative staff by playing a role in the selection process, e.g. as part of the interview panel, or in any way the Local Authority in collaboration with the Senior Coroner feels appropriate.

13. Post-Decision Challenges

Deal with any post-decision challenges brought against his or her own decisions in a robust and timely manner to protect the interests of the service. Notify the Senior Coroner and local authority where legal representation is necessary to defend such challenges.

Knowledge, Skills and Experience

To be eligible for appointment as a Senior Coroner a person must:

1. Be under the age of 70, (as per Para 10 of Schedule 3 Coroners Act 2009).
2. Satisfy the judicial appointment eligibility condition on a five-year basis.
3. Have the following:

- Experience of conducting investigative enquiries.
- Experience of court procedures and management including experience of juries.
- Experience of complex case management.
- Substantial and up-to-date knowledge of Coronial law and relevant case law.
- Strong stakeholder management skills.
- Effective communication skills with an ability to explain legal and medical terms to any audience.
- A high level of IT skills.
- Meticulous attention to detail.
- Financial management skills and experience of managing a budget.
- Ability to deal with emotionally charged situations requiring sensitive handling and positive judgement.
- Ability to remain stoic and cope with highly distressing cases
- Empathy and the ability to display compassion.
- Gravitas and the ability to inspire respect and confidence.

4. SUMMARY OF TERMS & CONDITIONS

The conditions of service applicable to the post are those set out in Schedule 3, Coroners and Justice Act 2009. The Area Coroner holds office on whatever terms are from time to time agreed. You will not be an employee of the Local Authority.

Salary

£102,000. This includes statutory out of hours responsibility as set out in the legislative provisions.

Hours of work

Monday-Friday 9am to 5pm.

Holiday entitlement

30 days. The Area Coroner and Senior Coroner are expected to ensure that they are both not on annual leave at the same time.

Pension Scheme

You will be eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for which you will be required to meet in full the employee contribution rate which is currently 10.5%.

Pay Bands and Annual Review

KCC has adopted the salary band for Area Coroners as set out in JNC Circular No 61. KCC has also accepted the recommendation of the JNC to award a 2% increase from 1 April 2019, with a further 2% increase from 1 April 2020.

Sickness

For the duration of this appointment, payment for absences due to sickness will be made on the same basis as for all KCC staff as set out in the Kent Scheme of Conditions of Service - 'blue book' – a copy of which can be provided on request.

Travel

A 'casual' car user allowance of 45p/mile for business journeys will be paid. Rail, bus and air travel will be paid at standard class fares only on submission of fully itemised receipts. The most cost effective method of travel should be selected for any particular journey.

If business travel involves travel to a location other than your designated base of work, and such a journey starts at your home, the mileage of the normal commute must be subtracted from the travel claim. Where it is necessary to pay toll and/or congestion charges, a receipt or other proof of purchase must be submitted with the claim.

If you use your vehicle for business purposes it must be insured for business use.

Mandatory training

You will be required to attend the Chief Coroner's mandatory training organised by the Judicial College. In the first year of your appointment this is likely to be 4 days, followed by 2 days 'continuation' training each year thereafter.

If the start time of the Chief Coroner's mandatory training is such that it will be necessary for you to leave home before 6am then KCC will consider paying for a hotel the night before but this must be agreed in advance with the KCC Head of Coroner Service. Where this is agreed you will be reimbursed for reasonable hotel expenses up to a maximum of £75 (£100 in London). You will also be reimbursed for the cost of a meal up to a maximum of £20. This includes a maximum of one drink (non-alcoholic) only when purchased with the meal. Hotel and meal receipts must be submitted with your claim; if they are not the costs will not be reimbursed.

Payment of travelling expenses to and from the Chief Coroner's mandatory training will be met by KCC. You should seek to car share with other attendees where possible but you will not be able to claim additional expenses for passengers.

Other than the Chief Coroner's mandatory training you are expected to keep up to date with the relevant rules, regulations, best practice and Chief Coroner's Guidance relevant to your role as Area Coroner during your own time and at your own expense.

If you hold and propose to retain any Assistant Coroner appointments outside the Kent area you must notify the KCC Head of Service of all such appointments. Where you retain Assistant Coroner appointments outside the Kent area KCC will only meet the travel and overnight expenses with regards to your attendance at Chief Coroner's mandatory training on a pro rata basis according to the number of Assistant Coroner appointments you hold.

Professional fees

KCC will reimburse the annual membership fee of the Coroners Society for England and Wales (CSEW). However attendance at all CSEW events including the annual conference will be at your own expense.

Designated work base

You will be provided with an office at County Hall, Maidstone and commuting, which is the journey between your home and designated work base, will not be reimbursed. Access to a car parking space will be provided.

KCC will provide you with the necessary office and equipment sundries at your designated work base. Casework administration is provided by KCC.

You will be expected to work from your office at County Hall on all weekdays. In exceptional circumstances home working may be possible subject to agreement. However, there will be no reimbursement for any costs associated with home working.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

It will be a condition of appointment that the successful candidate signs a MOU which sets out very clearly the respective roles and responsibilities of the postholder and the lead authority, and what each can expect from the other. The MOU will be provided to successful candidates only.

Indemnity

The Council will indemnify the post holder for costs or damages in relation to legal proceedings in accordance with Regulation 17 of The Coroners Allowances, Fees and Expenses Regulations 2013.

Notice period

The post holder may resign from office by giving three months notice in writing to the Head of Service. However the resignation does not take effect unless and until it is accepted by the Head of Service.

Politically restricted post

This post is politically restricted under the terms of Schedule 3, paragraph 4 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

The Guide to Judicial Conduct

The Area Coroner will comply with the standards as set out in the Guide to Judicial Conduct and other associated guidance.

5. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS

Applications

You are required to submit an application form and a full supporting statement of up to two A4 pages. It is important that your supporting statement fully addresses the following criteria.

1. Efficient management and organisation.
2. Up to date knowledge of coroner law and guidance.
3. Coroner skills in the office and in court.
4. Integrity, sound judgment and decisiveness.
5. Collaborative working, with staff, relevant authority and police.

6. Communication skills.
7. Sensitivity to diversity and cultural requirements.
8. An understanding of the role that the local authority plays in delivering the service.

If you do not complete a full supporting statement, your application will be rejected. Please ensure you include your work, home and mobile contact numbers, home address and e-mail addresses where applicable. Please note that correspondence will be via e-mail unless otherwise stated. All correspondence and details provided will remain confidential.

NB: Please attach your supporting statement to your CV and upload this as one document when completing your on-line application.

Employment references

Please include the name, address and contact details for two references. Candidates should also state their relationship to the referee and at least one should be your current/most recent employer/head of chambers/relevant authority. References will only be taken up for the successful candidate and the job offer will be conditional upon the receipt of satisfactory references.

Evidence of qualifications

Candidates will be required to bring evidence of their qualifications to the interview.

Disciplinary proceedings and criminal convictions check

Due to the nature of the post, it is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and therefore any conviction, whether spent or unspent, must be declared. Applicants invited to interview will be required to complete a declaration form. The successful candidate will be required to undergo a DBS check

Applicants must specify in their application if they are subject of any complaint or disciplinary proceedings by any professional body to which they belong and clearly the outcome.

Eligibility to work in the UK

Candidates must be eligible to work in the UK. The successful candidate will be required to provide original evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK.

Interview

You will be required to undertake a short presentation as part of the interview process.

Chief Coroner's role in the process

No appointment may be made unless the Chief Coroner and the Lord Chancellor consent to it.

Local authorities appoint coroners but do not employ them. Once appointed a Coroner

becomes and remains an independent judicial officer holder.

6. RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE

Closing date: 23:59 hours Thursday 13 June 2019

Candidates shortlisted: 26 June 2019

Interview invitations will be sent out: 28 June 2019

Interview date: 10 July 2019

If you do not hear by the 10th July 2019 please assume you have not been shortlisted.

The interview panel will be:

Patricia Harding, Senior Coroner

Giles Adey, Local Authority Lead Officer for Coroner Appointments

Chief Coroners representative: TBC

We are aiming for the successful candidates to take up post by the 22nd August 2019.